

It's your cursor, you can change it

The cursor is the blinking spot on your computer screen that tells you where you are — that is if you can find it! A cursor shouldn't be annoying, but often it is: flashing too little or too much, appearing too tiny or too drab.

Two handy and easy-to-love programs address this problem. The first, No-Squint from SkiSoft Publishing for \$39.95, focuses on the rate of blinking on certain laptops. The second, NoBlink from Nostradamus, \$49.95, goes further with additional features like choosing the cursor's color and the speed with which it moves.

Why the problem in the first place? If you're accustomed to your friendly blinking cursor on your desktop PC, you might feel a chill when you migrate to a laptop. All of a sudden you're straining to find the familiar blinking underline. Because making the transition from desktop to laptop often means moving to liquid crystal display technology, the cursor becomes a frequent casualty of the transition.

While LCDs provide the flat, thin



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easy to see. Here's more about the two programs:

■ No-Squint does just one thing: It allows you to adjust the rate of cursor blinking to make your cursor more prominent. It's a memory resident program that can be set up to load automatically every time you turn on your computer.

Typical No-Squint commands to control the blink rate include "slow," "normal," "very fast," "on" or "off." It couldn't be easier. It takes up a miserly 1 kilobyte of memory and uses simple English commands. One option you don't have with No-Squint, however, is

screens necessary for portables, they refresh their images slowly. As a result, the hardware tries to flash the cursor on and off quickly, but in fact the cursor is never really on or off and never really

making the cursor a large non-blinking block, and changing the color of the cursor on your desktop PC with a color screen.

■ Such customizing, and much more, is possible with NoBlink, a program I liked even better. With NoBlink, in addition, you can give your cursor a wardrobe of 26 different colors.

Choosing options with NoBlink is easy with its pop-up window. You can play around with colors, blinking, and cursor size while watching the effects on the cursor outside the window. I also like my cursor to move faster than normal and this also can be adjusted with NoBlink. I chose 3 on a scale of 4 for acceleration around the screen.

For those with EGA monitors, common for IBM PC-ATs, there's yet another NoBlink feature: the EGA Colorator. With this feature, which is also accessible from a pop-up menu, you can adjust foreground and background colors for any program on the fly.

No-Squint is available from SkiSoft Publishing Corp., 1644 Massachusetts Ave., Lexington, Mass.

02173, (617) 863-1876. NoBlink can be ordered from Nostradamus Inc., 3191 S. Valley Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84109, (801) 487-9662.

■ The Bottom Line. No-Squint is the more limited of the two. It is intended just to remedy the blinking rate on a particular type of screen, the LCD variety commonly found on laptops. It is a simple program that uses simple commands.

NoBlink, on the other hand, is more robust in features, and at only \$10 more, a better value. It can be used on a desktop as well as laptop. Once you've tried a solid block cursor in a contrasting color, you may wonder how you put up with the annoying blinking underline that is the default on most PCs. The additional features of adjustable cursor speed and EGA colors put this program in front for customizing your display.

Hillel Segal's column evaluates gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.